

Message to Constituents

U.S. Congressman Elijah E. Cummings

Representing the 7th U.S. Congressional District of Maryland

April 2, 2004

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Dear Constituent:

It is both a privilege and an honor to represent you in the United States Congress. While serving you, I will continue further outreach efforts to inform you of legislative action in Congress. I welcome your advice. Government “by the people” is the cornerstone of my legislative philosophy.

To better serve you closer to home, I invite you to visit or contact one of my district offices, which I have listed on the following pages. In Howard County, my staff and I make regular outreach visits at various community centers. We look forward to hearing from you!

Sincerely,

Congressman Elijah E. Cummings
Member of Congress

Congressman Cummings Granted Congressional Hearing on Medical Testing Errors

In response to findings that more than 400 patients tested at Maryland General Hospital for HIV or Hepatitis-C may have received inaccurate results, Congressman Cummings requested a congressional hearing to investigate the incident.

The hearing was granted by the House Government Reform Subcommittee on Criminal Justice, Drug Policy and Human Resources, where Congressman Cummings serves as the Ranking Member.

The hearing will be held on Tuesday, May 18, 2004, at 10 a.m. in the Rayburn House Office Building, Room 2154, Washington, D.C.

Among other issues, Subcommittee Members will investigate the factors that caused the erroneous test results, examine efforts to identify and re-test individuals who may have received incorrect results, and seek measures that should be taken to avoid similar mistakes from occurring in the future.

The Subcommittee will also try to determine the extent to which similar testing errors have occurred or are occurring in other U.S. health facilities.

“It is hard enough to get many of these individuals to even take a diagnostic test. Then, to hear that the test results could have been wrong, is even more shocking,” Congressman Cummings said.

“With a disproportionately high HIV/AIDS rate in Baltimore and among African Americans, this is robbing people of precious years of their lives. As for Hepatitis C, those affected could end up having a chronic liver infection that could be spread to others and put even more lives at risk.”

Congressman Cummings is also working with federal, state and local officials to further address the matter.

Congressman Cummings Leads Colleagues in Offering Alternative Budget Proposal

On March 25, a record 119 House Members voted to support an alternative federal budget proposal introduced by Congressman Cummings, Congressman Bobby Scott (D-Va.), and Congresswoman Denise Majette (D-Ga.). Maryland's U.S. Congressmen C.A. "Dutch" Ruppersberger, Chris Van Hollen, and Al Wynn supported the measure. This alternative budget was drafted by the Congressional Black Caucus, which Congressman Cummings chairs.

The alternative budget countered the Bush budget, which proposes to cut more than 60 crucial federal programs addressing homeland security, healthcare, housing, and other crucial issues. The alternative budget proposed to do the following:

- Fully fund the *No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB)*. Currently, the Bush FY 2005 budget underfunds NCLB by \$7 billion, affecting 30,000 children in Maryland.
- Provide adequate funding for troops serving in Iraq, Afghanistan and other areas, as well as provide veterans with \$8 billion in federal benefits when they come home.
- Increase Pell Grants for college students by \$2 billion which would benefit more than 60,000 Maryland students.

Congressman Cummings's proposal also addressed the \$521 billion deficit that the Bush budget would create, costing each Maryland taxpayer an additional \$3002 to pay off. In order to balance the budget, the alternative plan raised revenue by rescinding the tax cuts from 2001 and 2003 for individuals making more than \$200,000, as well as closed tax loopholes. At the same time, the alternative budget provided protection for the child care tax credit and continued to sustain the elimination of the marriage penalty.

Although the measure did not get the necessary votes for passage, it received the highest number of votes that the annual alternative budget proposal has ever received.

"I applaud my colleagues who supported the alternative budget," Congressman Cummings said. "It demonstrates a strong commitment to preventing our federal budget from spinning out of control, while strengthening and uplifting our nation."

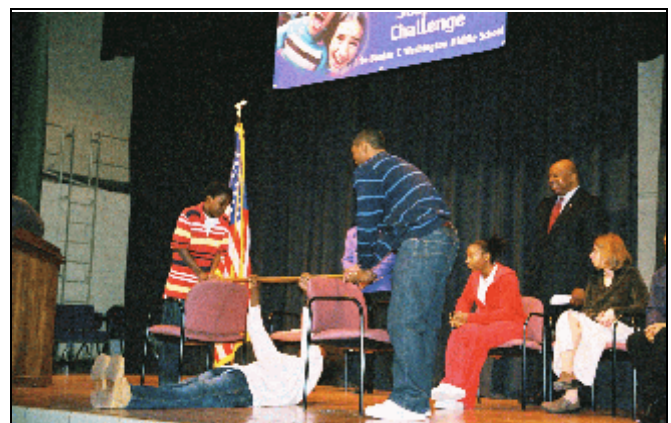
Congressman Cummings Challenges Students to "Step Up" for Their Health

Congressman Cummings joined representatives from the Baltimore Ravens, General Mills, and the health and fitness community on March 19 to promote physical fitness and nutrition education at Booker T. Washington Middle School in Baltimore.

The students watched as Ravens Safety Gerome Sapp and Ravens Strength and Conditioning Coach Jeff Friday demonstrated exercise routines. They also learned about proper nutrition guidelines from nutritionist Maureen Nathanson, PhD, of the Johns Hopkins Urban Health Institute for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) Program. The event culminated with the announcement of a \$1000 grant to be given to Booker T. Washington Middle School by General Mills after the students have participated in a 10-day fitness challenge.

Today, nearly 9 million children in the United States are obese or overweight. Obesity in children is a serious issue with many health and social consequences that often continue into adulthood. According to a study released by the Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA), poor diet and lack of physical activity will soon surpass smoking as the leading cause of premature death among Americans.

"Implementing prevention programs at an early age is important to controlling the obesity epidemic in America," Congressman Cummings said. "Our young people need to understand the vital roles physical fitness and nutrition play in their overall health."



Congressman Cummings (standing, second from right) looks on as Gerome Sapp (center, near chair) of the Baltimore Ravens teaches students how to use items found at home to develop an exercise routine. The event was part of an effort to get children to increase their physical activity, reduce obesity and improve overall health.

Federal Grants to the 7th District

Recently, several organizations in the 7th Congressional District received federal grants. Congressman Cummings helped to secure these grants by working with Senators Paul S. Sarbanes and Barbara A. Mikulski, as well as, Congressmen Ben Cardin and C.A. “Dutch” Ruppersberger. The grants include:

\$26 million contract for JobCorps Training: Adams and Associates, Inc., which operates the Woodstock Job Corps Center in Baltimore County, received a \$26,312,209 contract from the U.S. Department of Labor to support job training for at-risk youth.

Located in Woodstock, MD, the center helps approximately 500 students earn their high school diploma or GED, and then gives them vocational training in order to prepare them for a career of their choice. Following that, the center provides them support to adjust to the work world, by helping them with childcare, employment placement, housing and other services.

\$19 million for HIV/AIDS treatment: The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services awarded \$19,710,879 to the Baltimore City Health Department to help provide increased access to quality healthcare for individuals who are getting treatment for HIV/AIDS.

The grant will help patients, many of whom have partial or no health insurance, cover the costs for physician visits, case management, medications, home-based or hospice care, mental health services, and other related services.

\$168,356 AmeriCorps Homeland Security Grant for Civic Works in Baltimore: With this grant, the non-profit local service organization Civic Works would continue to implement its Project Liberty.

Launched in April 2003, the project trains volunteers to go out into various Baltimore neighborhoods in order to prepare residents for emergencies such as natural disasters or terrorist attacks. The volunteers disseminate information about public health, public safety, and disaster preparedness to more than 10,000 Baltimore residents.

\$53,964 Environmental Justice and Transportation Grant for Morgan State University: This grant, secured from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, will help Morgan State fund the Baltimore Region Environmental Justice and Transportation Project.

The project includes a series of listening sessions to identify the community’s concerns about transportation operations and how they affect the environment in minority and low-income neighborhoods.

The Greater Baltimore Urban League and Baltimore Metropolitan Project have partnered with Morgan State to implement this project.

Congressman Cummings Discusses Cost of War at Howard County Forum

Shortly following the one-year anniversary of the U.S. invasion of Iraq, Congressman Cummings joined U.S. Congressman Ben Cardin and State Delegate Liz Bobo in discussing the costs of the war on terrorism as well as the war in Iraq.

About 100 people attended the event sponsored by the Howard County Coalition for Peace and Justice at the Owen Brown Interfaith Center. Participants included a Christopher Hellman, military budget analyst for the Center for Arms Control and Non-Proliferation, a woman who lived under the Taliban regime (who withheld her name for safety purposes), and other activists.

At the forum, Congressman Cummings expressed concern that defense spending is pressing domestic needs to fund public schools, health care, housing, and the environment. However, he emphasized that he continues to support the troops.

“I am supportive of giving our troops the necessary resources they need to perform their duty of protecting this country,” Congressman Cummings said.

About the cost of war, Congressman Cummings noted, “the greatest cost of modern military weapons is not in their acquisition, but in their use.”

The war in Iraq has taken the lives of more than 600 men and women, wounded 3,000 U.S. troops, and also killed anywhere from 3,000 to 5,000 Iraqi civilians.

The United States and other coalition troops went to war to remove Saddam Hussein from power because it was believed that Hussein was developing or possessing weapons of mass destruction.

“We still have not yet found the weapons of mass destruction and in essence, have traded over 600 coalition lives and countless innocent civilians for that of one brutal dictator,” Congressman Cummings said. “So one year later, we must ask, was it really worth it?”

Congressman Cummings emphasized that U.S. troops must stay in Iraq until the nation is stabilized. But the ultimate goal, Congressman Cummings said, should be, “to begin working with international leaders to reclaim the moral high ground for the sake of both our morality and our security.”



Congressman Cummings reads books to children at the Phelps Luck Elementary School, in Columbia, Maryland for the 7th Annual Read Across America celebration to honor the birthday of noted children's author, Dr. Seuss on March 5th.

Would you like to get Congressman Cummings's newsletter by e-mail?

Please send an E-mail to:

**newslettercummings@mail.house.gov,
and include your name and e-mail.**

**Congressman Cummings's
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Howard County Outreach Centers

First Monday of the Month:
Glenwood Library, 2350 Route 97
Cooksville, MD 21723
Hours: 4:00PM - 6:00PM or by appointment

Second Monday of the Month:
Howard County Central Library
10375 Little Patuxent Pkwy.
Columbia, MD 21044
Hours: 4:00PM - 6:00PM or by appointment

Second Wednesday of the Month:
Savage Library, 9525 Durness Lane
Laurel, MD 20723
Hours: 4:00PM - 6:00PM or by appointment

Third Monday of the Month:
Florence Bain Senior Center
5470 Ruth Keeton Way
Columbia, MD 21044
Hours: 9:00AM - 11 AM or by appointment

Fourth Monday of the Month:
Miller Branch Library, 9421 Frederick Road
Ellicott City, MD 21042
**Hours: 4:00 PM - 6:00 PM or by
appointment**